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***Shanghai Sacred: The Religious Landscape of a Global City.* By Benoît Vermander, Liz Hingley and Liang Zhang. Seattle: University of Washington Press. xix + 255 pages. Softcover. ISBN 978-0-295-74168-0. US\$30.00.**

This monograph-length account of Shanghai's religious landscape is a welcome addition to the expanding literature on religious practice in the People's Republic of China (PRC). This is the first scholarly attempt to map religion – in its official and unofficial, public and private forms – in urban China on such a scale through a qualitative approach. It is all the more significant considering Shanghai's status as a global city, with a population of over 24 million and amongst the ten wealthiest cities in the world. The research project on which the monograph is based took more than three years and besides the three named authors, there is a long list of other researchers who took part in generating data (mainly students from Fudan University). The research employed a combination of ethnographic and visual approaches, mostly comprising participant observation and interviews. The authors' aim was to investigate a representative sample of the religious landscape in Shanghai, including temples, churches, mosques, yoga clubs, and people's homes. They note that they were unable to research makeshift mosques for migrant workers due to their sensitivity. The richness of the ethnographic descriptions is one of the key contributions of this work and the forty-eight full-page (color) images produced by Hingley, and presented together in three sections, add to the accessibility of the ethnographic vignettes and the overall analysis. The monograph presents a picture of religion in Shanghai which is fully honest to its diversity, and in doing so, challenges many popular assumptions about the dearth of religion in urban China as well as the lack of variety in the forms of religious practice.

Following a preface where the authors outline their overall approach to the project, give the reader an insight into their methodology and briefly introduce Shanghai as a global city, the Introduction embarks on a brief survey of the main conceptual motif driving the monograph: the sacred. Starting with Emile Durkheim's famous thesis on the sacred and profane, the authors trace in very broad terms how the sacred has been used and misused in the scholarship on religion. They then outline their own consideration of sacredness as a social construct and how personal experiences impact how the term is used and understood (p. 6). The Introduction also briefly considers the concept of sacredness in the Chinese context from the early pre-modern era. Chapter One places the contemporary city of Shanghai in its historical context and traces the major developments of Buddhism, Daoism, local temples associated with *huiguan* ('native-place associations') and *gongsuo* ('common-trade associations'), Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism from imperial times, through the Republican and communist eras and up to the present. This chapter also puts forward the provocative idea of 'civic sacredness' (as opposed to civil religion) as a useful approach to exploring the 'complex interaction [which] takes place among the municipal power, religious groupings, and city dwellers' (p. 34).

Chapter Two, *Calendars and Landmarks*, explores how Shanghai's religious rituals and buildings interweave to create the city's symbolic space. The chapter discusses the different calendars which Shanghai's myriad festivals and religious rituals follow as well as the, at times, ambiguous nature of religious landmarks and their use. Chapter Three, *The Wall and the Door*, describes the activities which are conducted within religious buildings but also considers the ways in which the buildings have different meanings at different times and are spaces which have (sometimes extensive) flexibility. Chapter Four, *A Shrine of One's Own*, investigates the home as a place for sacredness as well as how the idiom of the home is employed in religious sites and congregations. These aspects are important for religious adherents in terms of feelings of intimacy and belonging. Chapter Five, *Religious Waterways*, uses the imagery of waterways to examine the ways in which some religious

traditions are seeking to reclaim old channels and networks, others are building new ones, and further new religious groups take root in the city. The Conclusion, *The Sacred Tapestry*, attempts to 'modify' Durkheim's model of the sacred and profane. It does so by revisiting some of the core contents of the text as three binary opposites (*zheng/xie, xu/shi, dong/jing*) and two further concepts (*ling, ganying*) embedded in the discourse of religious practice in Chinese contexts. The monograph ends with five aspects of the Shanghai religious landscape which the authors argue can be applied to contexts beyond the Chinese reality.

The concluding chapter is followed by an Appendix of Fieldwork Sites, giving the reader 109 religious sites (including landmarks of civic sacredness) but not including private or unofficial meeting spaces, for understandable reasons. This appendix includes the location or address of each site in Chinese, and in itself, displays the diversity of religious forms across the city. This list will be useful for anyone hoping to visit any of the sites whilst in Shanghai or for researchers of religion in the city. The extensive notes which accompany each of the chapters come next followed by an thirteen-page glossary of Chinese terms, a Bibliography and an Index.

The ethnographic descriptions drawing on participant observation and extensive interviewing really make this book worth reading. Each of the main chapters is peppered with rich accounts of religious spaces and ritual activities, together with translations of participant interviews. The authors skilfully use these descriptions to give the reader insights into the motivations and meanings of religious activities for the practitioner as well as a deeper understanding of religious gatherings and rituals themselves and how they are conducted. The accounts of the different calendrical cycles present in the Shanghai context is particularly nuanced, and encompasses the solar, lunar and Islamic calendars, covering New Year, Mid-Autumn, Christmas and Eid al-Adha, to name a few (see Chapter Two). Chapter Four's exploration of the idiom of the home in religious practice is also particularly compelling, and reveals some of the ways in which religion addresses issues relating to displacement. The rich ethnographic accounts are accompanied by high-quality images and will be useful to both researchers and those who teach on religion in China.

A key aim of the book is to map Shanghai's religious diversity (p. x) and it is very successful in this regard. The book provides accounts of the religious practices of locals, migrants and foreigners across official, unofficial, public and private realms. Accounts of Buddhists, Daoists, Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Hindus, Hare Krishnas, Baha'is, Sikhs, Jews, Mormons, New Agers, Reiki healers, Yoga masters, and local deity worshippers are all included in the study. Focusing on worshipper agency, the study analyses how this diverse field impacts, shapes and reshapes beliefs and practices. The reader gains a sense of how significant religion is to Shanghai society and how the local, national and global elements of religion interact across time and space. By necessity, the analyses of each of these expressions of religiosity are not comprehensive and this further demonstrates the need for more sustained efforts to research and understand the role of religion in contemporary Chinese society. A keen example of this is the short account of the Protestant Deaf congregation (pp. 117-118) which certainly begs answers to more questions. What role does sign language play in this congregation's worship practices? What particular lexicon do they use for expressing their beliefs and practices? This monograph provides stimulation for many such avenues of further research.

There are several aspects of the monograph which this reviewer feels are shortcomings and need to be mentioned. Firstly, the authors recognise that there are some language terms in the lexical discourse of religion and the sacred which are specific to the local Shanghai dialect (p. 4). It is implicit throughout the text that the local plays an important part in shaping the sacred but consideration of the local religious lexicon is lacking and further consideration of it would have added more depth to

the accounts and rooted the landscape in Shanghai as a place. The inclusion of key religious terms in the Shanghai dialect would also be a useful addition to the glossary. The reviewer also noted several inaccuracies in the book which detract from its overall impact; for example, 'Singles' Day' was neither launched by Alibaba, nor did it come into existence as late as 2009 (p. 55).

These are minor shortcomings, however, and the book does offer a real contribution to our understanding of religion in the contemporary PRC, especially in urban areas. It will be of use to scholars of religion, anthropology, and sociology in Chinese contexts and urban studies more generally. While the book does not specifically engage in much discussion of the religion-state relationship in Shanghai, the diversity, breadth and sometimes effervescent nature of religious practice across the city as presented in the text certainly adds to the overall picture of an official policy on the management of religion in the PRC which has largely failed and suggests that any attempts to reign in and marshal this often fundamental aspect to Shanghai society could only be successful in part.

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